

HABS
IA.
51-Fairf,
2

James Frederic Clarke House
500 South Main Street
Fairfield
Jefferson County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-23

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington DC 20240

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Addendum to
James Frederic Clarke House
500 South Main Street
Fairfield
Jefferson County
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JAMES FREDERIC CLARKE-HOUSE

HABS No. IA-23

Location: 500 S. Main St., Fairfield, Jefferson County, Iowa

Present Owner: Grace M. Barwise

Present Occupant: Grace M. Barwise

Present Use: Residence

Statement of Significance: The design of the Clarke House follows the architectural principles of the Prairie School. The architect, Francis Barry Byrne, was trained in Frank Lloyd Wright's office, but the house is distinctively Byrne's interpretation of the principles and is an important example of American architecture of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Physical History

1. Dates of erection: 1915-1916. This date was interpolated from the known dates of the architect's working drawings, September 18, 1915; the date of purchase of the lot, Oct. 1, 1915, as noted following; the date of the landscape plot plan, February 14, 1917 (1); and the first published article on the finished house in December, 1918 (7, pp. 28, 29).

2. Architect: Francis Barry Byrne (1888 - 1967). Byrne's architectural training consisted of six years' work in the Oak Park office of Frank Lloyd Wright, where he began work as a young man in 1902. He had taken over the practice of Walter Burley Griffin late in 1913, when Griffin went to Australia in connection with his prize-winning plan for Canberra. Griffin and Byrne had worked together in Wright's office. During the first three years following 1913 Byrne executed several commissions. Some of them were houses in the Rock Crest/Rock Glen area of Mason City, Iowa, where Byrne completed work already begun by Griffin. Some other houses at Mason City were entirely of Byrne's design. In many respects the Clarke house resembles the work of Wright's office, but Byrne's work is simpler in overall outline and in detail. Another difference is the fact that Byrne collaborated rather closely in the Clarke house with Alfonso Ianelli, an artist who had been exposed to Wright for a short time working as a sculptor, and who was responsible in the Clarke house for the color schemes, interior design, furniture, and lighting fixtures (1, p. 13). Byrne, in his use of open planning and functional design, followed Wright's principles but used only a few of Wright's forms, such as leaded glass windows with straight-line patterns of lead comes. In the Clarke house only a few small squares of colored glass are used in each window to effectively enliven the lineal pattern. Also following Wright's practices

are the simple detailing of doors and windows, as well as extending the window trim to form panels between the windows of the first floor, and the use of similar moldings to divide the bedroom walls into rectangular panels. Unlike Wright's work is the greater simplicity of the decorative treatment -- the ceilings are free of lineal patterns in wood strips -- the use of bas relief sculpture above the fireplace, and the departure of the interior color scheme from the earth colors of nature. Ianelli appears to be responsible for the colors. His preference in colors appears in a series of vaudeville posters which he had designed a few years earlier in which he used brilliant primary colors with gold and black (4, pp. 8, 9). Also unlike Wright's work of this time is the use of semicircular windows in the Clarke house, which are explained in more detail in item No. 5 following.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

1915 Warranty Deed No. 1385. 1 Oct. 1915, recorded
22 Oct. 1915 in

Lot Deeds Book 71, pp. 418, 419

Charles A. Clarke, Mary Sampson and husband J. W. Sampson, Helen Vote and husband Rex Vote, Charles W. Clarke (single), Ruth H. Clarke (single) of Jefferson County, Iowa

to

J. Fred Clarke of Jefferson County, Iowa

For \$3000. A part of Block #26 of SW Addition to the City of Fairfield, Iowa. Begin NW corner Block 26, S on W line of said Block 132'; E on a line parallel to N line of said block to center of public highway, which is an extension of the street running N and S on W side of Public Square in Fairfield, NWly to a point where an extension of the N line of Block 26 would intersect center of highway, W on N line of Block 26 to beginning. (Grantors are only heirs of Emma W. Clarke, who died intestate c. 31 Jul. 1915).

1924 Warranty Deed. 14 Oct. 1924, recorded 15 Oct. 1924 in
Lot Deeds Book 82, p. 400

J. Fred Clarke of Jefferson County
to

Melinda Clarke of Jefferson County

For \$1 and for love and affection. Part of Block 26.
1946 Will of Melinda E. Clarke, 30 Oct. 1944, kept in
Probate Box No. 163

Melinda E. Clarke
to

Amy Beers of Muskegon, Michigan

The house and lot were valued at approximately \$15,000 in the inventory of will property. Melinda Clarke died 12 Aug. 1946.

1948 Warranty Deed. 23 June 1948, recorded in
Lot Deeds Book 111, p. 419

Amy Beers, single, of Jefferson County

to

Louise Martin Hunt

For \$1 +.

1963 Warranty Deed. 20 June 1963, recorded 21 June 1963 in
Lot Deeds Book 132, p. 592

Louise Martin Hunt and husband Walter Hunt

to

Grace M. Barwise

For \$1. A part of Block #26 of SW Addition...etc.

4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: The contractor of the Clarke house was the same as for the Jefferson County Hospital (6) which was dedicated 17 Sep. 1912 and opened 2 Oct. 1912 (2).
5. Original plans, construction, etc.: Very complete and detailed working drawings were furnished by the architect (8). The house is a two-story structure of dark red-brown brick. The overall dimensions are 30'-4" wide by 72'-0" deep, excluding an enclosed one-story sun porch which projects from the south side into a garden. The front of the house (one of the narrow sides) faces east on S. Main Street, with a narrow driveway running along the north side of the lot and making a right angle turn south to the attached garage on the northwest corner of the house. The house has a partial basement accessible by stairs from a hall connecting the entrance hall with the kitchen pantry.

The entrance hall, living room, and dining room are subdivisions of one large space. Within this large space

the volume of the fireplace and chimney stack, with two attached screen walls together make a partitioning element that is L-shaped in plan. Each screen wall is pierced by a wide opening extending from the level of the door and window heads down to eye level. In addition, the continuity of the spaces is emphasized by the design of the south wall as one unified composition to which both the living room and dining room relate. These main rooms were oriented toward the sunlight and garden view at the wishes of Malinda Clarke, who had previously lived in a house of northern exposure (8, p. 207). Cross ventilation was also provided for most rooms of the house for comfort during the Summer.

The Clarke house incorporated planning and detailing features far ahead of its time. The open plan concept has already been mentioned and did not become common in American homes until after World War II. The sun porch projected at right angles from the house to take advantage of the summer breezes and to allow enjoyment of the garden in privacy. The garage was attached to the house but was separated from the master bedroom above with a fireproof ceiling of reinforced concrete. Window screens and storm sash were mounted from the inside, allowing easier and safer installation and cleaning. Window frames and sash were of simple rectangular cross section or of composites of rectangular forms. Glass was retained by small wooden stop moldings instead of glazing compound. Window and

door trim, as well as the baseboards, were flat and had thin horizontal surfaces to minimize collection of dust. The doors were not paneled but were simple, flush planes such as those used commonly today. Closet space was unusually large in a time when wardrobes were still used. Also the four-foot wide level eaves were cut to create a slight slope in the upper surfaces and lined with metal to form built-in gutters.

The color scheme was one of the unique features of the Clarke house. The living room ceilings were white, the wood floor was stained black, the brick of the fireplace was of a golden tone, the over mantel was ultramarine blue relieved by ivory and gold, the pilaster and pier capitals were painted in same blues, the woodwork and the wood of the furniture were reported as silver-gray birch but they are now of medium brown color and do not appear to have been refinished, the rug was red with a blue and white border, the upholstery was blue edged with black, and the hangings were gold toned with blue stencil. The dining room color scheme was the same, except the walls were pure yellow, the rug was blue with red and white enrichment, and the upholstery was red with a gold edge (3, pp. 31-33). Lighting fixtures are narrow strips of thin glass ground on one side and suspended from a hammered brass frame (6). The fence and gate screening, the kitchen entrance and the balcony above the front entrance were painted ultramarine blue, harmonizing richly

with the dark red-brown brick walls. The sash and the plaster soffits and gables were painted white and the rest of the exterior woodwork black, while the roof was gray green (7, p. 29).

A controversial feature of the house is the use of semicircular windows, a choice of Byrne's which is unlike Wright's work of this time. There is a large one at the front of the living room, facing the street, and two smaller ones, one at the cellar stairway and one in the garage. Seen from within the living room, the arched form seems completely out of place, except perhaps to relate to the circular dining room table and the curved corners of the chairs. The two small semicircular windows seem particularly inappropriate for their respective locations, especially as seen from the interior (6).

6. Notes on alterations and additions: No alterations or additions have been made to the structure. Air conditioning has been installed, with the evaporator placed near and connections made via the fuel bin hatch; in the kitchen the staple bins have been removed and the refrigerator placed there, and overhead cabinets changed and new equipment has been installed; several elm trees removed and new trees and foliage planted, all by present owner. The bas relief over fireplace removed by Mrs. Hunt (6).

Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Buildings

Dr. Clarke was a prominent figure in the community and very progressive in the field of medicine. Dr. Clarke lectured on hygiene in the College of Medicine and Dentistry of the University of Iowa, made the first x-ray pictures in Jefferson County, and performed the first appendectomy there. During his service with the Army in the Spanish-American War he obtained the first employment of trained female nurses in Army field hospitals. He organized a medical unit in Fairfield and served with it in France during World War I. In Fairfield, he was instrumental in bringing about the construction of the Jefferson County Hospital (5, p. 26) which opened in 1912 (2); he served as mayor and as a county representative in the state legislature. He founded the first golf club in the state and the first Rotary Club in Fairfield (5, p. 26) and he bought the second automobile in the county in 1903 for use in his practice (B, p. 317). He was concerned with providing medical services to the poor, and, in later life supported the newly proposed concepts of socialized medicine (8, p. 248).

Sources of Information

Primary or unpublished sources.

- (a) Landscape plan of plot, Francis Barry Byrne, landscape architect, Feb. 14, 1917. In possession of the present owner.
- (b) Photos, old views, interior and exterior. In possession of present owner. Some of these are the same as the

photographs in (3) and (7).

- (c) Portfolio of Byrne's work. In possession of present owner.
- (d) Warranty Deeds and Will of Malinda Clarke. At Jefferson County Courthouse, Fairfield, Iowa.
- (e) Working drawings titled: "James Frederic Clarke, M.D. Fairfield, Iowa. House. Francis Barry Byrne, Architect. Monroe Bldg., Chicago. Sept. 18, 1915." Five sheets, blueprints. In possession of the present owner. Microfilm copies in possession of W. I. Shank.

Secondary and published sources.

- (1) Chappell, Sally Anderson. "Barry Byrne, Architect: His Formative Years." Prairie School Review, IV qtr., 1966. pp. 5-23.
- (2) "Dr. J. F. Clarke Physician Here 50 Years Dies" Obituary in Fairfield newspaper, in clipping file, Fairfield Public Library.
- (3) "The Evolution of a Personal Style as Shown in the Work of Barry Byrne and Ryan Company." Western Architect, March 1924. pp. 30, 31, 35.
- (4) Griggs, Joseph. "Alfonso Iannelli. The Prairie Spirit in Sculpture." Prairie School Review, II, No. 4, 1965. pp. 5-23.
- (5) "A History of Medicine in Jefferson County, Iowa" as published serially in The Journal of the Iowa State Medical Society, Dec. 1934 to Dec. 1935, p. 26.

- (6) Private communication. Grace M. Barwise. 500 S. Main St. Fairfield, Iowa. W. I. Shank, 4 Nov. 1971; D. A. Peterson, 31 Mar. 1972.
- (7) "The Residence of James F. Clarke, Fairfield, Iowa. Barry Byrne, Architect. "House and Garden", Vol. XXXIV, No. 6, Dec. 1918, pp. 28, 29.
- (8) Welty, Susan Fulton, A Fair Field on James Frederic Clarke, Detroit, 1968.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Condition of Fabric

Excellent

Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: width, 30'-4" plus 18'-2" for projecting sun porch, totaling 48'-6"; length, 72'-0".
2. Number of bays: not applicable.
3. Number of stories: two plus partial basement; sun porch one story.
4. Layout, shape: rectangular, open plan with parallel service hall first floor; long service hall second floor.
5. Foundation: poured concrete low foundation 12" thick, increases 5" in thickness above grade; smooth finish.
6. Wall construction, finish and color: brick, running bond, raked joint, dark red brown in color, rough finish; masonry backup.
7. Structural system, framing: exterior masonry bearing wall; interior wood frame construction.

8. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: 20'-0" wide one-story enclosed sun porch projects 18'-2" from south side of house. Approximately 4' x 4' wooden balcony projects over main entry on northeast corner.
9. Chimneys: one central chimney structure for furnace, fireplace, and attic vent, 2'-0" x 10'-10", matching brick, poured concrete cap.
10. Doorways and doors: Solid wood doors with large leaded glass areas. Simple wood trim.
11. Windows: casement with leaded glass; poured concrete, projecting sills; three semi-circular windows, brick arch, no key stone; sash painted white.
12. Roof shape & covering: approximately 20° pitch gable roof, shingled.
13. Cornice, eaves: 4'-4" eave overhang, built-in gutters; raised gable ends to prevent run-off. Simple wood trim, rough-sawn, stained black. Exposed leaders.
14. Dormers, cupolas, towers: none.

Description of Interior

1. Floor plans:

Basement. Interior access stair N side, fuel bin NE; boiler room SE, laundry room SW with door to area way and exterior steps to rear garage entrance; store room NW, vegetable storage N just W of stair.

First floor. Stairway N side; entry hall NE; living room SE; dining room S with sun porch access through four doors from dining room, exterior door SE corner of sun porch;

kitchen W with garage attached to W wall of kitchen;
pantry and toilet N off service hall just W of stair.

Second floor. Stairway N side; bath and balcony NE,
bedroom #1 SE, bedroom #2 and study S; sleeping porch
SW with access from study and hall; master bedroom,
bath and dressing room W, small bedroom and bath
(originally for maid) N just W of stair.

2. Stairways: First floor to second: Open stairway with balustrade from entrance hall to landing. Enclosed service stairway from hallway to landing. Stairway to basement is enclosed, with a landing. The ceiling of this space covers the top of one semicircular window. Pass-through wood box from basement landing to main entry under stairs to second story half landing.
3. Flooring: In general, hardwood stained black. Tile floor in sun porch. Concrete in basement. Wall-to-wall carpeting presently in main rooms and halls of house.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: painted plaster ceilings; painted plaster or wall-papered walls.
5. Doorways and doors: Solid wood flush doors of medium brown colored finish, grain showing. Trim wood of same finish. Wood is birch for both.
6. Special decorative features: Cabinets and trim are of the same wood and finish as the doors and trim. Windows and french doors have leaded glass, clear, except for a few accents of small squares of colored glass. The fireplace brick and the dining room sideboard have been painted white.

7. Notable hardware: All cabinets, doors and windows have simple brass hardware. Windows have interior mounted storm windows and screens secured with concealed bullet catches. Second-floor windows in stair well are opened and closed via operating crank projecting through wall into the bathroom E of stairs.
8. Mechanical equipment: Lighting fixtures in the main rooms are made of strips of thin ground glass hanging from hammered brass frames. Dual furnace system employing forced air through inside floor registers in living and dining rooms and exposed radiators in remainder of house.
9. Other notable features: Basement walls plastered. Large built-in cedar closet. Direct access for ice to ice-box from kitchen entry through special door in wall.
10. Miscellaneous remarks: Fireplace brick and dining room sideboard painted white. Half of hardware missing on cedar closet, probably due to forced entry. Outer corner of wood balcony floor beginning to decay; miscellaneous tiles in bathrooms coming loose, otherwise house is in virtually perfect condition throughout.

Site and Surroundings

1. General setting: On SW corner of S Main and Madison, facing E on Main St. Residential district surrounding house. In addition to narrow brick drive from Main St.,

there is a shorter and wider brick-surfaced access to the garage from Madison St. Many trees and shrubs, as is characteristic of older neighborhoods.

2. Historic landscape design: The original landscape design was by Arthur Seifried, according to S. A. Chappell (1). There is a landscape plan signed by Byrne as a landscape architect (a). Brick platform piped for erection of fountain south of sun porch. Fountain never built.
3. Out buildings: None.

Prepared by Wesley I. Shank
Iowa State University 1972

Edited for HABS by Druscilla J. Null 1983